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Corps crews respond to oil spill at Ice Harbor Dam

Burbank, Wash. — Workers at Ice Harbor Dam have begun cleanup of a large oil spill that occurred there around midafternoon today, according to an environmental compliance specialist for the Walla Walla District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"This spill is in a contained area of the dam, none of this light-grade turbine oil has leaked out into the Snake River," said Wendy Alenduff, who coordinates environmental issues for the dam. "Our fish biologist discovered the spill while making daily rounds at about midafternoon today."

Corps officials examined the oil containment area to ensure no migrating endangered species were in the area where the spilled oil was found. Approximately 1,000 gallons of turbine oil are estimated to have leaked into a gate slot for one of the dam's hydroelectric generating turbines. Operations, maintenance and environmental staffers at the dam inspected the spill area and found a damaged seal on a cylinder that helps open and close the gates that supply water into a turbine. The seal was replaced immediately by maintenance workers to prevent any further oil discharges.

Corps emergency response crews quickly started soaking up spilled oil while other officials at the dam started notifying various state and federal agencies. A Tri-Cities area environmental response service, "Safety Kleen," was called in to collect, remove and dispose of the oil. Corps and contractor crews worked until shortly before dark, according to Alenduff. Cleanup efforts will resume early tomorrow morning.

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